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Book of LDS poems: a bouquet with thorns

■ **Women reflect:** Ranging from sentimental to brooding, the selections embrace life and love.

By Jerry Johnston
Deseret News staff writer

WHERE FEELINGS FLOWER: POETRY OF LDS WOMEN; collected by Barbara B. Smith and Shirley W. Thomas; Bookcraft; 166 pages; \$12.95.

Let's begin with this: If you mailed a copy of this collection of poems to Harold Bloom — one of America's highbrow literary critics — you'd likely get it back with a cryptic note: "Dear Sir or Madam, I do not do windows and I do not do books covered with pink flowers featuring several poems that spread sentiment across the page like marmalade."

But now that's said, let's take look at this new edition of "popular poetry" for what it is, and not for what it isn't.

"Where Feelings Flower" was written for a specific audience: LDS readers who enjoy verse that helps define their values, dreams and fears. It was written for the reader who lives on Main Street, Mainstream, USA. And — not by accident — it was written for those of us who will be looking for a high-minded Mother's Day gift come next May.



Eliza R. Snow



Elouise Bell

The book is basically a greeting card with some tangy sauce to it.

It is a bouquet of roses — complete with thorns and bees.

As you might expect, the collection tends to confirm more notions than it challenges; but it also serves to introduce readers to some of the more poignant and sinewy thinkers among LDS women: Emma Lou Thayne, Elouise Bell, Carol Lynn Pearson, Penny Allen — just to name a few.

The poems are divided into sections. Themes include "Sensitivity to Children," "Gratitude for Growing Old," "Affinity for the Earth" and others. Printing is in mauve, with each page framed by flowers — much like expensive sheets of stationery.

Going through the book, I first turned to the poems written by women whose names I recognized. I was pleased to see that the late Vesta P. Crawford — Utah's original "Short Grass Woman" — was represented by several poems. As the voice of popular rhyme and reason, she's still untouched. Poems by cheery Kathryn Kay — whose light verse has tickled hundreds — reveal her darker, more brooding side; and Dixie Partridge has always been a local favorite.

Margaret Rampton Munk, Susan Evans McCloud, Alice Morrey Bailey, Lael Hill, Sally Taylor, Mabel Jones Gabbott, Olive Eurt and Dorothy O. Rea are included, along with several fine writers with less recognizable names such as Udora Morris and Lehora Hansen.

Several poems by Eliza R. Snow — the pioneer poet — have been included to anchor the collection in both the LDS tradition and culture.

So. Is the volume worth your money and your time?

Well, you're going to need to get Mom card anyway, and at \$12.95 "Where Feelings Flower" is in the price range of many fancy Hallmark items. Besides, you get 150 verses instead of just one, and most of them feature lines that pack the kind of punch and personality Hallmark can't touch.